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March 27, 2001
 Contact: Jim Pickering
pickering@udayton.edu

NEWS RELEASE

SENATE DEBATING MCCAIN-FEINGOLD CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM BILL; UD EXPERTS COMMENT ON BILL'S SIGNIFICANCE, CONSTITUTIONALITY

BILL SHOULD HAVE FARTHER REACH — The McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform bill, starting its second week of debates in the U.S. Senate, is a "step in the right direction," but also should include revisions to "hard money" policies as well, says Gerald Kerns, a University of Dayton political science professor. The bill proposes to eliminate "soft money," contributions given to political parties that are to be used for party building purposes only.

"If we can eliminate soft money, well, that's a positive step," says Kerns, who has been analyzing the American political scene for 40 years. "Ultimately though, I'd like to see an end to hard money too. I believe campaigns should be run solely through public financing."

"First rounds" of the debate have been favorable to the bill's survival, says Kerns, quickly qualifying, however, that chances of it "making it through the Senate unscathed is unlikely." He adds, "The non-severability or poison-pill amendment, which would have declared that if one part of the bill was unconstitutional the whole bill was unconstitutional, was voted down. If it hadn't, President Bush would have had the power to veto the entire bill. He still might."

For media interviews, contact **Gerald Kerns** at UD at 937-229-3650, at home at 513-583-9672 or via e-mail at gerald.kerns@notes.udayton.edu.

BILL SHOULD NOT BE PASSED — The McCain-Feingold bill should not be passed because it is unconstitutional, says the Rev. John Putka, S.M., a political science lecturer at UD. "Giving money to a candidate's party is a form of free speech and, as such, the bill would be a violation of the First Amendment."

If passed, the bill also would give incumbents an unfair advantage over election rivals, Putka says. "Very few individuals would be able to finance their own campaign against an incumbent. It's no coincidence that, in about 90 percent of Senate races, incumbents get re-elected — and that they're millionaires. It takes a tremendous amount of money to run against them."

Putka would like to see a bill enacted that would make campaign donations a matter of public record before an election. "Full disclosure of campaign donations before elections would allow the American voter to see who is bankrolling whom and then to vote accordingly."

For media interviews, contact **Father John Putka, S.M.**, at 937-229-2594.